

VZCZCXRO3902

OO RUEHFK RUEHKSO RUEHNH
DE RUEHKO #4408/01 2640742

ZNY CCCCC ZZH

O 210742Z SEP 07

FM AMEMBASSY TOKYO

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7801

INFO RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING IMMEDIATE 9085

RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA IMMEDIATE 2350

RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL IMMEDIATE 5143

RUEHFK/AMCONSUL FUKUOKA IMMEDIATE 3284

RUEHNH/AMCONSUL NAHA IMMEDIATE 5698

RUEHOK/AMCONSUL OSAKA KOBE IMMEDIATE 6936

RUEHKSO/AMCONSUL SAPPORO IMMEDIATE 4009

RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE

RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE

RUCPDOC/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE

RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI IMMEDIATE

RHEHAAA/NSC WASHDC IMMEDIATE

RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC IMMEDIATE

RUEATRS/TREASURY DEPT WASHDC IMMEDIATE

RUEHIN/AIT TAIPEI IMMEDIATE 6662

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TOKYO 004408

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/20/2017

TAGS: PGOV PREL ECON JA

SUBJECT: LATEST POLLS SHOW FUKUDA STRETCHING LEAD IN LDP
PRESIDENT RACE

REF: TOKYO 4327

Classified By: AMBASSADOR J. THOMAS SCHIEFFER, REASONS 1.4(B),(D).

¶1. (C) Summary. Yasuo Fukuda has lengthened his lead over rival Taro Aso in the LDP presidential race, securing the backing of nearly 70 percent of LDP Diet members, according to a Kyodo News report on September 20. Fukuda is also out-polling Aso in the LDP prefectoral vote, based on preliminary responses to a Jiji Press survey published the same day. The new LDP President will be elected by a simple majority of the 528 votes cast -- one by each of the 387 LDP Diet members and three by each of the 47 prefectoral chapters. The votes will be tabulated and the results announced mid-afternoon local time on September 23. End Summary.

¶2. (C) Former Chief Cabinet Secretary Yasuo Fukuda continues to lengthen his lead over Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) General Secretary Taro Aso in the race for party President, according to the press and Embassy contacts. The LDP announced on September 20 that the votes will be tabulated at LDP headquarters in Tokyo beginning at approximately 2:00 p.m. local time on September 23, and the winner announced shortly thereafter. The winner may name the new LDP executive lineup the same day, according to an LDP contact. Based on figures compiled by Kyodo News and published on September 20, Fukuda has already secured the votes of nearly 70 percent of the 387 LDP Diet member votes, compared to 20 percent for Aso. Approximately 60 LDP lawmakers are still undecided. Fukuda continues to enjoy strong support from eight of the nine LDP faction leaders, but the factions do not vote as a bloc, and there have been some defections to the Aso camp.

¶3. (C) Fukuda also has a slight advantage in the LDP prefectoral chapter vote, although the numbers are still very preliminary. The 141 chapter votes -- three for each prefecture -- will count for more than one-quarter of all votes cast. According to a Jiji Press survey of local LDP executives concluded on September 19, Fukuda has already lined up 24 votes in 14 prefectures, compared to 18 votes for Aso. Thirty-two prefectures have offered no definitive response. The LDP has requested that the prefectoral

chapters keep the results of their tallies hidden until the votes are tabulated in Tokyo on September 23, to avoid influencing the votes of the Diet members. More than two-thirds of the local chapters are putting the matter to a vote of the rank-and-file members.

¶4. (C) An on-line public opinion poll published in Tokyo Shimbun on September 20 showed Fukuda with support from 40.1 percent of respondents, compared to 18.2 percent for Aso. Fukuda supporters are skewed toward an older demographic, with 62.4 percent over the age of 40, and only 37.6 percent coming from those in their 20s and 30s. Aso scored 43.8 percent with younger voters, and 56.3 percent among those over 40. Asked to name their pick for Prime Minister, however, a majority of respondents chose opposition Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) leader Ichiro Ozawa, with Fukuda coming in second.

¶5. (C) Neither Fukuda nor Aso has offered detailed policy prescriptions during public debates over the past few days, citing the suddenness of the campaign. In remarks to the foreign press on September 19, they sounded remarkably similar. Both prioritized revitalizing local economies that have been left behind by former PM Koizumi's structural reforms, and promised to focus on livelihood issues. Results of the Tokyo Shimbun poll show that LDP prefectoral chapter executives overwhelmingly favor a focus on the social divide. Both also confirmed their support for the 1995 statement by then Prime Minister Murayama expressing remorse for Japan's wartime acts, and expressed their desire to prevent the Yasukuni Shrine issue from becoming politicized. Aso did try to distinguish himself from Fukuda during the speech by

TOKYO 00004408 002 OF 002

delivering his remarks entirely in English. At one point, he characterized the election as a race between "an old LDP and a new one," casting criticism on Fukuda as the candidate of the factions.

Schieffer